

Ingraham

CARPENTER  
CASE 1

Carpenter was a very able and reliable employee. He was inventive, skillful, and a superior workman. Now 35 years of age he had joined your firm after graduating from high school.

After working as a helper for three years the company sent him to school and encouraged him to earn his license as a master heating and cooling installer. Six months ago he decided to launch a business of his own and work at it evenings and Saturdays. The services he offered were almost exactly the same as those offered by the company of which he was an employee. Carpenter's supervisor found out about the new business adventure but took no action for a couple of months believing it might not prove successful and the best approach would probably be to wait and see.

One afternoon Carpenter's supervisor found Carpenter making telephone calls on company time and using the company's telephone to order materials for his own business. O. U. Kidder, who worked with Carpenter, told the supervisor that Carpenter took out installation permits for his own business while he was at City Hall getting permits for the company's installations.

The supervisor reprimanded Carpenter, warned him that such practices would not be tolerated, and stated that the incident would be reported to the general manager. Subsequently, Carpenter was told by the general manager that he was being given four weeks in which to either, (1) get rid of his business, or (2) quit his job as an employee of the firm.

At the end of four weeks Carpenter was asked by the general manager what his (Carpenter's) decision was regarding his own business. Carpenter replied that after thinking it over and talking it over with his friends, he had decided to continue on his job with the firm and to continue his own business. Carpenter reminded the general manager that he (Carpenter) had a good work record with the firm and that his outside work was not interfering with his work for the firm. Carpenter also told the general manager that, "What I do on my own time is of no concern to the general manager or the firm." Carpenter also said to the general manager that, "the small amount of business I am doing could not possibly hurt the firm and most of my customers do not like to do business with the firm." Carpenter also stated that he was using his own tools and was not soliciting any of the firm's customers.

Three days later Carpenter was given his dismissal effective immediately.

QUESTIONS:

Was Carpenter's action ethical?

Was the supervisor's action ethical?

Was the general manager's action ethical?

If you were Carpenter, what would you do now? Why?

In what other way could the problem be handled?